

News Release

For Immediate Release



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COX CONSERVES HEROES FINALISTS NAMED!

Online Public Voting for winners begins Monday, April 13 on 4sd.com

SAN DIEGO April 8, 2009 - The public has weighed in and nominated San Diego's environmental heroes who continue to make great strides in ensuring a greener tomorrow. Through the [Cox Conserves Heroes awards program](#), sponsored by [Think Blue San Diego](#), [The Trust for Public Land](#) and [Stand for Less](#), three youth and three adult finalists will win a cash donation for the environmental non-profit of their choice.

Cox Communications is asking the public to cast their vote for their favorite first, second- and third-place heroes in the youth and adult categories. To help the public learn more about the nominees, the finalists will be profiled on a special 30-minute *San Diego Insider Magazine* on Channel 4 San Diego Sunday, April 12, and their stories will be posted on www.4sd.com. Winners in each category will receive \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,000 respectively to donate to their favorite environmental non-profit organization.

Online voting at www.4sd.com begins Monday, April 13 and ends Sunday, April 26 at 5 p.m. PT. The winners will be announced in early May and all finalists will be recognized on the field at the Padres game on August 22, 2009.

The following youths and adults were selected by a judging panel as Cox Conserves Heroes finalists after being nominated by the San Diego public:

YOUTH NOMINEES

Jennifer Gold is the founder and president of **Valhalla High School's Recycling Club**. Concerned about the environment, the club placed recycling bins throughout the campus and now sorts and sends the recyclable materials to a recycling center, instead of sending these items to a public dump site. The effects of Jennifer's program are felt worldwide. Valhalla's Recycling Club donates half of its recycling proceeds to Outreach International, a charity that works in 12 underdeveloped countries throughout the world to help those that live there overcome the devastating effects of poverty and hunger.

Jose Mendoza is a student at Hoover High School and is the president of the Hoover Eco Club. Through his involvement with the Hoover Eco Club and other environmental organizations, Mendoza became an organizer of the **Friends of Swan Canyon**. Volunteer efforts including the removal trash, non- native plants and the reduction of

gang activity and the homeless population in the canyon have made visible changes. As one of Hoover Eco Club's most active members, Jose was recognized by the school for his participation in several school clean ups. Other school projects include a recycling program, a school garden in the making, and a yearly Earth Day presentation.

Sonya Vargas was one of two youth members who served on the steering committee for the **Wetland Avengers/ Campeones de los Canones**, a community-based habitat education and restoration event. The steering committee, which consisted of restoration biologists, a landscape architect, a master gardener, a senior park ranger, advisors and educators, participated in weekly planning meetings to create restoration plans, design a school garden, develop volunteer and coordinator protocols, determine event logistics, create educational materials, and recruit volunteers. Strong leadership and communication skills were needed, and Vargas was able to mobilize and inspire an unengaged community to care for their canyon habitat. As a result, over 950 volunteers participated in the event by planting 2,500 native plants, restoring two acres of canyon and wetland habitat, creating a school garden at the adjacent elementary school, and designing an outdoor classroom.

ADULT NOMINEES

Josie Hamada is an exemplary member of the San Ysidro Women's Club and an asset to the San Ysidro Community. Through the **9-11 One Hundred Cherry Tree Peace Grove** project, Hamada's small community garden project was transformed into a county-wide attraction. The Beyer Elementary school playground used to be a barren, dirt lot until Hamada transformed it into a peaceful grove consisting of 100 cherry trees where students and community members alike can walk and sit to remember those who died in our tragic 9-11 attacks. Adjacent to the 9-11 One Hundred Cherry Tree Peace Grove is the Makaguchi Nature Garden consisting of drought resistant plants and native vegetation. The gardens she has created have become one of the most positive assets in an otherwise struggling community.

Diane Nygaard single handedly formed the **Preserve Calaveras**, which has protected, preserved and added land to this beautiful watershed area in northern San Diego County. Nygaard was instrumental in the purchase of a 134-acre parcel in the Buena Vista Creek Valley located in Carlsbad known as the Sherman Acquisition. The land is strategically important for water quality, wildlife movement, Native American culture and early California history. Nygaard organized several successful public events to showcase this little valley and raised approximately \$150,000. In addition, she has organized community clean-ups, held Wildlife Appreciation events, birding walks, and hosted cultural lectures about this valley; public trails with information kiosks are in the planning stages.

John Willett was nominated as a Cox Conserves Hero for **Reclaiming the Otay River Valley** in the Otay Valley Regional Park (OVRP), a 13-mile unique urban river parkway in the South Bay. Willett, a World War II veteran who will turn 88 years old in June, has been volunteering in the park for over two decades, dedicating countless hours in the planning, clean up and restoration of the park. Clean up efforts led by Willett have resulted in the removal of over 700 tires, 1,400 tons of trash and 150 homeless encampments. Willett also is the chairman of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, a group

of residents that volunteer their time to help address the park's issues including vandalism, trash and homeless encampments. Thanks to the efforts of John Willett, the Otay Valley, once treated as an unwanted wasteland, is now a valuable community resource for outdoor recreation and enjoyment of nature for all South Bay families.

The Cox Conserves Heroes program was created in 2007 through a partnership between The Trust for Public Land and Cox Enterprises, the parent company of Cox Communications. The partnership stems from Cox Enterprises' national Cox Conserves program designed to reduce the company's carbon footprint by 20 percent by 2017, and promote eco-friendly behavior among its employees, communities and other corporations. To help honor San Diego County's unsung environmental heroes and inspire neighborhood conservation, Cox Communications, in partnership with The Trust for Public Land, Think Blue San Diego and Stand for Less launched the "Cox Conserves Heroes," awards program in February. The award money was provided by The Cox Kids Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Cox Communications. The Cox Kids Foundation is funded by Cox employees, who donate money directly from their paychecks and is then matched 100 percent by the company.

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About Cox Communications

Award-winning Cox Communications is a full-service telecommunications provider of voice, video and data services. Operating in San Diego County since 1961, Cox offers the latest in digital and high definition cable television, high speed Internet, local and long distance telephone service, digital video recorder service and On Demand programming. Commercial voice and data services are offered via Cox Business; advertising and promotional opportunities are available through Cox Media; and Cox Communications San Diego owns and operates award-winning Channel 4 San Diego, television home of the San Diego Padres and local programming including: *Postgame*; *Sam the Cooking Guy*; *San Diego Insider Magazine*; *Shades of San Diego*; *Brainwave*; *One on One with Jane Mitchell*; and *High School Football*. In 2008, Cox was honored in J.D. Power & Associates 2008 Major Provider Business Telecommunications Study; J.D. Power & Associates 2008 Residential Regional Telephone Customer Satisfaction Study in the West; Cox Internet Voted No. 1 by the San Diego Union Tribune Reader's Poll; and voted as one of San Diego's Best Places to Work by the San Diego Business Journal. For more information, visit www.cox.com and www.4sd.com.

About The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since 1972, TPL has worked with willing landowners, community groups, and national, state, and local agencies to complete more than 3,500 land conservation projects in 47 states, protecting 2.5 million acres. TPL has helped states and communities craft and pass over 330 ballot measures, generating almost \$25 billion in new conservation-related funding.

About Think Blue San Diego

Think Blue is the City of San Diego's award winning Storm Water education and outreach program. Started in 1999 as part of the Clean Water Task Force, Think Blue is responsible for teaching residents, businesses and visitors steps they can take to prevent pollution and protect our waterways in San Diego. Think Blue reminds residents that when it rains or when water flows out of yards, it enters storm drains and flows untreated, directly into our creeks, rivers, bays,

beaches and ultimately the ocean. Think Blue seeks to raise public awareness that the City storm drain system and sewer system are NOT connected and that storm water can contain pollutants, including pesticides, pet waste, trash, and automobile fluids which are harmful to our health and impact local marine life.

About Stand for Less

Stand For Less is a pilot project created by San Diego Forward, a collaboration of local and state partners working to make San Diego a more environmentally sustainable community. The California Department of Conservation founded San Diego Forward, and its partners consist of: SANDAG, San Diego County Water Authority, California Air Resources Board, California Center for Sustainable Energy, San Diego Gas & Electric, San Diego Air Pollution Control District, and San Diego Environmental Services.